

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Heathfield St Mary's School

Full Name of the School	Heathfield St Mary's School
DCSF Number	867/6000
Registered Charity Number	309086
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Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	5th to 8th November 2007

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Heathfield St Mary's School is a boarding school for girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years. The school underwent a major change with the merger of Heathfield School, Ascot with St Mary's School, Wantage, in February 2006. The new school operated on two sites during 2006-7, and the Wantage site closed in July 2007. A small number of pupils transferred from the Wantage site to the Ascot site during 2006-7. Heathfield School was founded in 1899 as a boarding school for girls. It has remained in the same buildings, extended and modified, ever since. The main building is a large Georgian house, surrounded by extensive grounds and playing areas.
- 1.2 Pupils join the school at 11, 13 and 16. The school selects its pupils through either 11+ or 13+ Common Entrance papers, or the school's own entrance papers set for pupils at all levels. Those joining at 11+ or 13+ generally join from fee-paying preparatory schools, with very few maintained schools represented. Most pupils have not boarded before.
- 1.3 There are 200 pupils on roll, all full boarders, including 67 in the sixth form. A total of 38 pupils receive some sort of fee support. The school draws from a wide range of feeder schools, with pupils coming from more than 100 over the last 4 years. For 24 pupils, English is not their principal language. Four-tenths of pupils live in London, a similar proportion elsewhere in the UK, and one-fifth live overseas, of whom half are from expatriate families and the remainder foreign nationals. The school uses a range of standardised tests to identify the academic profile of pupils on entry. Pupils' average ability is above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be above the average for all maintained secondary schools.
- 1.4 The aim of the school is to provide a holistic education appropriate for girls of the 21st century set within a Christian boarding community. Emphasis is placed on the way in which, as a full boarding school, pupils and staff at Heathfield St Mary's are able to live successfully as a community. Pupils are invited to contribute to the life of the school, and to respect others, acquiring through daily life an understanding of the values it promotes. The school aims to meet parents' and pupils' needs by providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere and ethos, and by providing small classes.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The quality of education is good. The school provides an appropriately wide range of educational opportunities suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. The school successfully meets its declared aim to provide a holistic education appropriate for girls of the 21st century within a Christian boarding community. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a high quality of educational provision.
- 2.2 The academic curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' development in language, mathematics and science, and ensures good progress in acquiring literacy and numeracy skills. Creative and aesthetic development of a high order results from excellent provision in, for example, art and photography. Pupils develop good technological skills through well-resourced provision for information and communications technology (ICT) and for textiles and cookery. The provision for physical development through games, physical education and swimming lessons is good.
- 2.3 The school's academic curriculum is enhanced by a comprehensive and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities. After-school activities, including sports, music and clubs, are appropriate to the different age groups and are offered on the basis of investigation into what pupils most want to do. Inter-house competitions, including drama, provide good extra-curricular experience, and the quality of performance achieved by the school's choir contributes a powerful sense of achievement. Team and specialist coaching for a wide range of sports including fencing, lacrosse, polo and swimming, is organised by a newly-appointed director of sport and wellbeing. At weekends, pupils are able to take part in a range of activities over the year, including games, outdoor pursuits such as mountain biking, visits to exhibitions and local towns, and social events with nearby public schools. Valuable leadership opportunities are provided for Year 12 pupils through taking on leadership roles during weekend activities. Liaison between staff who organise activities is close, and ensures that pupils are involved but not overloaded during weekends and after school.
- 2.4 The school provides effective guidance on careers and option choices for pupils at GCSE and A level. Work experience is not arranged formally by the school, but parents are able to provide good opportunities for pupils to spend time in interesting and relevant workplaces. The head of sixth form manages a successful programme of higher education guidance. Sixth-form pupils are given personal guidance on higher education choices, with close attention to their interests and ambitions, and good support is provided in completing university application forms. The librarian manages careers advice and offers good support for the girls as they research higher education options. The school has an excellent record of success in placing pupils in their first-choice universities.
- 2.5 The curriculum is effectively planned, providing equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. It has undergone recent improvements in provision for ICT, personal, social and health education (PSHE), and physical education. Religious studies forms a part of the core curriculum for all pupils, consistent with the school's aim to maintain its Christian tradition. The school is in the process of refining the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 by increasing time allocations for core subjects and rationalising the range of other subjects currently being studied. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form provides a satisfactory range of subjects at GCSE and A level, suited to the interests and abilities of the pupils. Arrangements for managing option choices for GCSE and A level are under review with the aim of helping pupils to focus on decision-making, and to take account of staffing resources and timetabling.

- 2.6 The school successfully meets the curricular requirements of all those pupils requiring learning support, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Individual assistance with EAL is provided in lessons for a number of pupils who require this support. In a Year10 geography class, where about half the pupils were not native English speakers, skilful teaching led the whole group to a confident understanding of terminology which could be used to reflect on the emotions evoked by a waterfall. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified by appropriate diagnostic and screening tests, and are given satisfactory support, but measures to identify and help gifted and talented pupils are less effective.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Learning and achievement are good in all aspects of school life. Pupils are well educated and achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and critical and creative understanding in their subjects and activities, and learn to apply them effectively. They also develop well the essential skills and attitudes for work and study. The breadth and depth of learning and achievement are closely aligned to the aim of the school to provide a holistic education. This aspect of the school's provision has been maintained at a high standard since the last inspection.
- 2.9 The wide variety of activities taking place both within and outside the classroom extends the range of experience and gives many opportunities for success. For example, a Year 8 history display on the Renaissance was explained by pupils with great enthusiasm and pride. Pupils confidently apply the knowledge and skills acquired in lessons and activities and show their ability to think for themselves. In drama, they are able to take responsibility for directing and evaluating their own performances.
- 2.10 Attainment is good at all levels in the school. A carefully monitored and effective programme of collecting data shows that there is no significant difference in the relative attainment of different groups. The staff with responsibility for collecting, collating and analysing data, ensure that the information obtained is used by other staff in their day-to-day work to monitor and improve the progress of pupils.
- 2.11 Pupils' attainment in public examinations is good in relation to their abilities. The results obtained in GCSE and at A level are well above the national averages for maintained schools. The progress pupils make from Year 7 to Year 11, and from Year 11 to Year 13, as measured by nationally standardised measures of progress, is also good.
- 2.12 Many pupils have significant achievements as individuals and as members of groups or teams. They participate in inter-house drama competitions, creating plays which are written, cast, performed and directed by pupils. The school recently won the National Girls School Polo Championship.
- 2.13 Pupils of all ages have good skills and attitudes for work and study across the curriculum. The pupils are articulate; they speak well and express their knowledge and ideas clearly. They listen well, showing respect for the speaker, and read intelligently, showing understanding through expression. Pupils write fluently and effectively in a wide range of contexts. They are able to apply mathematics and mathematical concepts effectively in a variety of subjects, for example, graphs and equations are used well in geography and chemistry.

- 2.14 Excellent use of ICT is made by pupils. Homework is often emailed to staff, and requests for help with specific topics emailed to support staff before lessons. Teachers make lesson plans and materials accessible to pupils by email to allow independent study. The pupils make good use of sophisticated music software and a language software programme, and they prepare their own computer-generated displays. Tests in some subjects, for example, physics and mathematics, are done on-line. Good use is made of the internet, with the school paying due regard to ensuring internet security. Learning materials and packages accessible by computer are very well used by pupils.
- 2.15 Pupils reason and argue cogently and think well for themselves. In religious studies, discussion is used well to challenge pupils to think hard and express their views, as for example, when Year 11 pupils debated, in a carefully supervised and responsible way, proposed changes to the abortion law, and pupils in a Year 13 English class discussed the work of the Romantic poets in a perceptive and thoughtful manner.
- 2.16 The pupils show good ability to study and work independently, and they have good note-taking skills. In modern foreign language lessons, the pupils show a strong desire to learn and are able to manipulate language well. They study and work effectively both on their own and with others in groups and teams, as, for example, in their group work in drama and photography. After-school preparatory work is done in well-organised sessions both in classrooms and study bedrooms. Pupils settle well in lessons, persevere and apply themselves, and enjoy their work and activities.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.17 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of pupils is good, and maintains the quality of provision found at the time of the last inspection. The atmosphere in the school is one of a morally aware environment where everybody matters. A sense of mutual support and respect prevails, and pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility to others as a result of the caring atmosphere of the school. The school successfully meets its aims to provide a Christian boarding community with a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and social and moral awareness.
- 2.18 The development of pupils' spiritual awareness is highly effective, reflecting the aims of the school. The value the school places on the individual, and the palpable sense of community fostered through the boarding community, promote self-knowledge and self-understanding. Opportunities for spiritual insight are built into the daily pattern of school life, which incorporates assemblies of a religious nature and time for reflection in the chapel. The fine chapel interior, as well as the beauty and character of the site and grounds, add to the capacity of the school to make good provision for spiritual development. This is enhanced by the work of the chaplain and by the teaching in religious studies and PSHE, where opportunities arise for the discussion and analysis of issues of meaning, identity and value. The school encourages pupils to feel that they can discuss spiritual matters in an open and positive way.
- 2.19 Pupils show a strong moral awareness. The school is explicit about the values it seeks to develop, and pupils exhibit a strong moral sense and an awareness of ethical issues. This extends to their views of the character of the communal life of the school, which fosters the development of interpersonal skills and the qualities of tolerance, courage and integrity.
- 2.20 Pupils' social awareness is strongly developed, and they understand the importance of equality and justice in and for the school community. This is bound up with the responsible and caring attitudes the pupils have for each other. Work in art, history and photography is effective in developing pupils' personal responses and reasoned judgements, allowing them

to reflect on social and environmental issues as well as personal values. The discussion of social issues in English as well as religious studies and PSHE helps to develop humane insights. A series of weekly lectures provides a relevant and stimulating focus for learning about public institutions. A visit by a pioneering female politician renowned for her work with oppressed peoples made a powerful impression on the pupils.

- 2.21 Pupils demonstrate a well-developed awareness of, and respect for their own and other cultures. The presence of pupils from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the UK and overseas gives the pupils first hand experience of living in a multi-cultural society. Their understanding of different cultures is deepened by the study of world religions in the religious studies programme. Opportunities to encounter British culture come through, for example, theatre and museum visits. Pupils gain knowledge of other cultures and interpretations of spirituality when groups visit a Hindu temple, a mosque and a synagogue. Further afield, sixth-form art, history of art and photography visits to Paris provide rich opportunities for the development of cultural understanding. Understanding of language and geography are developed through, for example, visits to Spain and historical insights supported by visits to battlefield sites.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.23 The quality of teaching is good overall, effectively helps the school meet its aims and successfully promotes its expectations and values. The high quality seen at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Some of the teaching is outstanding, and a small proportion is satisfactory.
- 2.24 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities, including those with EAL, to acquire new knowledge, make good progress and increase their understanding and skills. In most lessons the high standards of teaching ensure that pupils are interested in their work and are able to think and reason for themselves. Teachers expect very good behaviour in class and around the school, and with a few minor exceptions pupils live up to this expectation.
- 2.25 Lessons are well planned and employ a range of teaching methods. In an innovative mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 12, the teacher gave a lively explanation of a complex mathematical concept by using movement and gesture, enabling the pupils to understand the concept clearly and enjoyably. In a religious studies lesson in Year 9, pupils experienced a practical session in Hindu meditation. In art, sixth-form pupils used sophisticated and unusual clay techniques to create sculpture and craft jewellery, resulting in further development of creative skills.
- 2.26 The subject knowledge of most teachers is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well. They have a good understanding of pupils' abilities and prior learning, and use this to direct their teaching, often adapting lesson plans to ensure that pupils' specific learning needs are met. Pupils benefit greatly from the small class sizes and the expert and individual attention teachers give them. These are key factors in the good progress pupils make in the school.
- 2.27 Educational resources are excellent, with ample teaching and learning materials of good quality, and these are used well in lessons. The classrooms are bright and well decorated with displays which help pupils learn, including examples of their own work. Pupils and staff make excellent use of the very good computer facilities, and increasing use is made of the interactive whiteboards available in all teaching rooms. The newly-refurbished library is well resourced and stocked, and used extensively by pupils for research, with the number of

pupils borrowing books increasing. A well-equipped music room with a good range of instruments, recording equipment and sheet music enhances the study of music, and the newly-installed cookery facilities are of high quality.

- 2.28 The school has recently introduced a school-wide marking policy, but it has not yet been taken up by all subjects and the quality of its application is variable. Whilst very good verbal feedback on work is given in class, the marking of written work is uneven. The best marking provides a clear indication of achievement and constructive comments, informing pupils as to how to improve their work. However, a small proportion of marking is less than effective.
- 2.29 The school's assessment system is effective. Good use is made of baseline testing and regular internal assessment. This information is collated and used by subject leaders and passed to tutors who then discuss results with pupils and set targets for improvement. Although good provision is made to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities through the 'Spectrum' programme, the recording of progress made by pupils is variable in quality.
- 2.30 The school meets all the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good overall, with pastoral care as an outstanding feature and a major strength of the school. The very good practice identified in the previous inspection has been improved further through the introduction of better tutor support for pupils, and a house system which brings girls from all years together in each of the four houses. These changes support the school in meeting its aims of living successfully as a boarding community. The school is aware that there are some gaps in procedures for checking the suitability of staff on appointment, and is taking the necessary steps to put this right.
- 3.2 The staff provide effective support and guidance for all pupils. The school sees its small size as key to close communication between staff, and this enables a vigilant eye to be kept on each individual in the school's care and for swift action to be taken on issues as they arise.
- 3.3 The house staff are helped by excellent pastoral arrangements that ensure good co-ordination among colleagues as pupils progress from year to year through the school. Responses to a parental questionnaire distributed prior to the inspection show that parents recognise pastoral care as a particularly strong element of the school. Record-keeping about pupils is of high quality and communications between and within houses are excellent. The heads of houses, who take overall responsibility for the pastoral and academic welfare of the pupils, provide outstanding support. A well-organised team of staff have clearly defined roles in managing and providing pastoral care, and regular meetings are held to ensure good co-ordination of care between academic and pastoral staff.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is excellent. Pupils are polite and helpful to each other. They value highly the supportive and friendly nature of their relationships with the staff. Very effective measures are in place to help new pupils to settle in, and, through the vertical structure of the houses, they work well with the older pupils.
- 3.5 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are effective. Codes of conduct are well known to the pupils and staff and are respected throughout the school. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with carefully in accordance with the school rules. Incidents of bullying are rare and the anti-bullying policy is effective in dealing swiftly with any instances that occur. Rewards are used constantly and effectively to give the pupils the desire to achieve. The school maintains suitable admissions and attendance registers.
- 3.6 The school has a child protection policy but it does not comply with DCSF Guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* with regard to carrying out appropriate checks in respect of each member of staff. The school is aware of this, and is taking the necessary steps to put it right. Teaching, non-teaching, boarding, maintenance and catering staff are trained in child protection procedures. All necessary measures to reduce the risk of fire have been taken and a detailed risk assessment for all buildings is regularly updated. The school carries out risk assessments appropriately, and has a full range of health and safety policies which include all school activities and out of school visits. A health and safety committee meets regularly and monitors the safety and security of the school site.

- 3.7 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) draw up a written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, in order to comply with DCSF Guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* [Regulation 3.(2)(b)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.8 The school has an effective partnership with parents and worthwhile links with the wider community, an improvement since the last inspection. The needs of parents are met by providing a warm and welcoming school, and this addresses one of its key aims.
- 3.9 The vast majority of parents express strong satisfaction with the education provided by the school, and they value highly the outstanding pastoral support and guidance given by the staff. Overseas visits by the headmistress give the opportunity for prospective parents to find out more about the school and the UK education system, and for existing parents to be further informed about their child's progress. In addition, a designated member of staff has special responsibility for liaison with overseas pupils and their parents.
- 3.10 Parents continue to be welcomed at all sporting and cultural events. Parents' meetings take place once each year for each year group. They are well attended and afford parents the opportunity for face-to-face discussion with all staff. The parents' association is well supported, meets regularly and is a valuable forum for discussion between the school and parents. It is also a means of informing the school of parental concerns and of making parents aware of changes that have occurred or are planned.
- 3.11 The use of email has helped to make it easier for parents to communicate with the school and to contact staff directly to discuss pastoral and academic matters. The school website also provides an effective link with the school. It has a dedicated area for parents that allows them to keep informed about school policies, updates to the calendar, sporting events and pupil achievement. The site also gives details about the school counsellor and community links.
- 3.12 The school's review and development of reporting procedures has had positive results. The format and content of academic reports now address the issue of inconsistency mentioned in the previous report. They provide good information about pupil achievement and highlight areas where pupils can improve.
- 3.13 Parents are able to contact any member of staff if they have any concerns about their child's education. Systems are in place to deal with concerns informally in the first instance, and parents may pursue concerns further if necessary through a suitable complaints procedure outlined on the dedicated parents' area of the school's website. The complaints procedure is rarely used, and most concerns are resolved at the informal stage.
- 3.14 The school's links with the wider community are good. Pupils undertake regular visits to a local special school and an elderly care home. The school raises money for charity through events including a well-established school fair before Christmas. An arrangement with a school in Germany allows a small number of pupils to experience life in a school abroad, with pupils from the German school visiting Heathfield St Mary's in return. The school also fosters links with a local maintained girls' day school. Involvement in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme affords some opportunities for service in the community. The school's lecture programme covers a wide range of topics and is given by speakers who offer good opportunities to hear about varied experiences and to encounter stimulating views and ideas. The school is aware that there is scope for these links to develop further.

- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.16 The quality of boarding education is good with some outstanding features. Boarding provision meets the school's aim to live successfully as a community. As noted in the inspection report of 2002, pupils enjoy a very positive boarding experience. Maintaining the high quality of boarding has been of particular importance and has been seen as a priority for the school during recent changes.
- 3.17 The high quality of the boarding experience is due to the outstanding expertise and dedication of those involved in pastoral care. The school has a range of systems in place to ensure that new pupils settle well and that all have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. House identity is celebrated in positive ways through inter-house competitions and lively display boards in common areas in the school. Pupils' welfare is closely monitored by pastoral staff and the ethos of mutual support within boarding houses is exceptionally good. Positive and supportive relationships between staff and pupils are very secure. The organisation of preparation time is conducive to effective learning, and pupils feel that academic support is readily available outside lesson time. Boarders are able to use ICT facilities, the library and other resources during these times and at weekends.
- 3.18 Since the last inspection, the good range of sport and aesthetic activities both during the week and at weekends has been enhanced. The activities are appropriate for the age groups for which they are provided. All boarders appreciate the comprehensive facilities on site, and the opportunities afforded them to go off site to enjoy specialised activities such as polo and dry-slope skiing. Weekend activities are varied and some give older pupils the opportunity to develop leadership skills.
- 3.19 Although there are some variations in the quality of accommodation between and within year groups, all the boarding accommodation is at least satisfactory and meets the needs of the boarders. The school has plans to provide new boarding accommodation in the longer term. Each year group has a dedicated common room with facilities suitable for the age range.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. Since the last inspection in 2002, the governing body has continued to set and secure appropriate aims and values for the school and provides very effective oversight and guidance.
- 4.2 The structure of the governing body is appropriate, and governors have used their good range of expertise to help the school through a demanding period of change brought about by the recent merger of the two schools.
- 4.3 Regular meetings, which include a series of briefings by the headmistress and other staff, ensure that the governors have a good knowledge of the workings of the school and its needs. Frequent informal discussions take place and the staff presentations provide governors with the opportunity to debate school priorities. Minutes of meetings are clear and informative. The system of meetings and briefings provides effective oversight, monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives. The governing body is aware of its responsibilities, and is involved in the educational development and financial planning of the school.
- 4.4 Governors are a valued presence at school events and join staff recruitment panels. Their constructive relationship with senior staff ensures that they are well informed and understand the differing roles of staff members. The governors' decision to put capital investment into new projects at the school has been carefully planned in the light of pupil numbers. They have placed the school in a well-resourced position, facilitating new developments such as the performing arts centre. The governors have also been successful in enabling the school to complete several smaller projects such as improving ICT facilities, extending and refurbishing the library and providing a new cookery room.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management is good overall. The headmistress has been involved in the management of two periods of extensive change in the last few years and, with the loyal support of her staff, has maintained a clear educational direction and strong leadership throughout. The recently revised management structure is well suited to building on those changes and focusing in detail on the consolidation of improved curriculum and middle management developments.
- 4.6 The senior leadership team has put in place a system for middle managers to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility. The period of change resulting from the merger of the two schools limited the scope for this to be implemented, but the school is now refining and moving forward with this initiative. Heads of faculty and heads of houses hold regular meetings and are focused on teaching and learning, and the care of pupils. They feel well supported by the headmistress in developing their role although changes of personnel at senior staff level have hindered the process. Academic middle managers have also changed their roles and are just now feeling the value of a period of stability to help them consolidate their management and further develop a commonality of procedures. Meetings and monitoring of individual subjects work well. The heads of faculty are currently efficient in fulfilling their management roles. The faculty arrangement is being kept under review as the developing needs of the school emerge.

- 4.7 The needs of the school have been carefully analysed by the headmistress and her team. Their priorities have included a review of the curriculum and development of the role of middle managers and tutors, as well as a better match of staff to teaching requirements. The 'Spectrum' programme, which is aimed at supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, has had improved resources, although some shortfall in its effectiveness results from organisational problems. The new director of studies is implementing procedures for curriculum review, marking and assessment change and the use of target-setting.
- 4.8 Good school policies are in place, reviewed regularly and adjusted if necessary. Staff understand and abide by these. Appropriate procedures and policies are in position to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, and pastoral care, with regular and well-minuted meetings. Appraisal and performance management began following an appraisal of the headmistress in 2006, but the system has been slow in implementation and not all staff have yet been appraised. The system has been modified to increase the speed of this process.
- 4.9 The training of staff is effective, with regular training sessions held several times within the term and outside term time, provided as appropriate both "in-house" and by external providers. Induction is conscientiously covered for new staff and is effective. The school supports newly qualified teachers through an appropriate induction programme and teachers feel well informed about their roles as they take on new tasks.
- 4.10 Care is being taken to support and motivate staff in light of the many changes which have taken place as a result of the merger, particularly in relation to the structure of staffing. Regular consultation has taken place with staff through their committee and individually. The staff have shown loyalty and support towards the school community.
- 4.11 The management of finances has been effective in securing excellent resources in support of the school's aims and to meet the needs of the pupils. The administration of the school is efficient. The school has systems in place to check the suitability of staff, supply staff and governors, but there are some shortcomings in this area, of which the school is aware.
- 4.12 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) carry out all appropriate checks in respect of each member of staff appointed to a position in the school [Regulation 4.(2)(a)].
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5].
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Heathfield St Mary's is a school with a distinctive character and a number of excellent features. The school has been through a period of very significant change, with the merger of two schools on two separate and distant sites into one new school. Staff at all levels have co-operated and worked very hard to maintain a stable and happy environment for the pupils and to meet the school's aims during this difficult period. The educational experience provided is good and securely in line with the educational objectives of the school. The school gives pupils a good grounding in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' knowledge, skills, understanding and application are good, and they are keen and inquisitive learners. Teaching at the school is good and sometimes outstanding, and this, together with small classes and very good teaching resources, ensures that pupils of differing abilities make good progress and succeed above expectations in examinations. Middle managers work hard to fulfil their roles. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are good overall. Pastoral care is outstanding and a major strength of the school. This is a school that knows its pupils well and is meticulous in giving attention to the needs of individuals. Boarding provision is good and well organised.
- 5.2 The school has improved its links with parents since the last inspection, ensuring they are kept well informed about their child's welfare and academic progress. The school has good links with the community but is aware that more could be done to develop this aspect of its work. Governors know the school well and have provided good guidance and support during the recent changes. The school has been well led through a difficult period, but the implementation of some management initiatives have been slowed by the impact of change. Well-considered plans are already being implemented to build on the existing good provision and develop the school for the future.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 3 (welfare, health and safety) and Standard 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff).

Next Steps

- 5.4 No area of the school's provision is weak, but in order to improve further, the school should:
1. develop the work of the learning support department to include records and individual plans for pupils, to support and enhance the good work which is taking place.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) draw up a written policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, in order to comply with DCSF Guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 - (2) carry out all appropriate checks in respect of each member of staff appointed to a position in the school [Regulation 4.(2)(a)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Peter Jones	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Beverley Birchley	Senior Teacher, SHMIS school
Mrs Gwen Caddock	Former Headteacher, ISA school
Mrs Marilyn Cass	Headteacher, GSA school
Dr Stephen Loxton	Head of Department, GSA school
Mr John Richley	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mrs Elizabeth Skelton	Deputy Headteacher, GSA school